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SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: USG-FUNDED NGO ACTIVITIES UPDATE

¶1. (U) Summary: Representatives from four USG-funded NGOs (UNOPS, IRI, NDI, and IFES) met with USAID project manager and poloff to review status and activities of election support projects. The meeting, held weekly, serves to ensure coordination and information sharing between projects funded through USAID. During the January 17 meeting, UNOPS briefed group on the increasing use of its regional Centers for Political Party Logistic Support (CALPPs). IFES representatives indicated that its short term observer (STO) mission may be reduced due to budget constraints and also raised several issues of concern regarding election preparations. End Summary.

¶2. (U) UNOPS representatives provided readouts of the activities currently underway in the political party support project, including a positive assessment from a January 11 meeting in Port-au-Prince of all managers from the regional CALPPs. Broad trends across the CALPPs indicated that political party representatives are using the photocopy machines and transportation services while the meeting rooms and computer/word processing access are less in demand. Additionally, UNOPS reported that they have installed the Communication Support Project and the system is operational at the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) offices. UNOPS personnel also assisted the CEP accreditation office recently by providing additional typewriters for use by an expanded staff to prepare credentials for national and international election observers.

¶3. (U) The IFES Observation Mission continues to have five two-person election observation and monitoring teams in the field in addition to the chief observer and deputy based in Port-au-Prince. With the change of the election date to February 7 prolonging the electoral season, IFES will face a possible budget shortfall possibly requiring a reduction in the size of the STO mission. Currently, plans call for deployment 30 STOs for coverage of actual election day coverage. (Note: With the new electoral calendar, we understand that both the Canadian-led International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (MIEEH) and the EU Observation Mission (EUOM) may be facing similar budget constraints. Post will make inquiries and report septel. End note.)

¶4. (U) Participants debated the lines separating the legality of an election from the credibility of the process lending legitimacy to the result. There was general accord that at this stage, the process, though flawed, may still produce an acceptable result. IFES representatives also raised five specific concerns related to the electoral process: the CEP's inability to provide names of staff for

each polling station (bureau de vote, BVs), unclear procedures for transmission of results from individual BVs to the tabulation center, pending distribution of the remaining 900,000 voter registration/national identity cards, claims that as much as one-third of the electorate will have to travel significant distances to their polling place due to the inadequate number of voting centers, and serious reservations over the quality of the ballot boxes.

15. (SBU) Comment: Issues raised by IFES and the Canadian and EU observer missions closely correspond to concerns of the political parties and the general public. We are confident that the CEP and MINUSTAH have addressed these issues, but the uncertainty that continues to predominate in both domestic and international circles reinforces the need for the CEP to focus urgently on providing public information. International observers also express increasing unease over legal corners that elections authorities have had to cut. Post shares these concerns, but we remain convinced that CEP Director Jacques Bernard and MINUSTAH officials have taken reasonable steps and crafted reasonable compromises in order to make sure credible elections proceed. We will continue to remind everyone that the goal of these elections is to produce a result that fairly reflects the will of the Haitian people, and that the election process should be judged on that standard. End Comment.

CARNEY